

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

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**EASLEY AND IDAHO GOVERNOR URGING SUPPORT OF HEALTH CARE COVERAGE FOR
NATIONAL GUARDSMEN AND RESERVISTS, REGARDLESS OF MOBILIZATION STATUS**

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley and Idaho Gov. Dirk Kempthorne, co-leaders of the National Governors Association's efforts regarding the National Guard, are urging Congress to support legislation to provide health care coverage for members of the National Guard and Reserves, regardless of mobilization status.

"We ask our citizens in uniform to stay trained and ready to do tough jobs both here at home and overseas," Easley said. "They should not have to worry about adequate medical coverage for their families and themselves. If enacted, this new proposal will take that worry away."

In a letter sent Wednesday to leadership in the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee of Armed Services, the governors urged support for the TRICARE provision contained in the Senate-passed version of defense authorization bill S. 2400. TRICARE is a U.S. Department of Defense medical plan.

Easley and Kempthorne stated that the provision "would allow National Guard and Reserve personnel to purchase health coverage for themselves and their families through TRICARE, regardless of mobilization status. The provision would also cover a portion of the health care premium for those who opt to maintain private health coverage when called to active duty."

Currently, the federal government only provides TRICARE coverage to members of the National Guard and Reserve who are mobilized. Last month, Gov. Easley signed legislation that allows TRICARE coverage to be offered as an alternative to eligible active duty or retired state employees, under age 65, in North Carolina.

"This provision would improve readiness and enhance recruitment and retention of the National Guard and Reserve, both currently playing an increasingly integral role in military operations domestically and around the world," Easley and Kempthorne stated. "These patriotic men and women deserve support for complete health benefits for themselves and their families."

The letter was sent to Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-California), chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, and Rep. Ike Skelton (D-Missouri), the committee's ranking minority member. Provision sponsors are Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina) and House Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-South Dakota).

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